A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN SPRINGFIELD, AUGUST 28, 1823;

AT

THE ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

BIBLE SOCIETY,

THE

FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

AND THE

EDUCATION SOCIETY,

OF THE

COUNTY OF HAMPDEN.

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SERMON.

JOHN XII, 5.

WHY WAS NOT THIS OINTMENT SOLD FOR THREE HUNDRED PENCE, AND GIVEN TO THE POOR?

THERE is something so very plausible in this suggestion, that every one would be ready to say, at first view, that it must have been dictated by a most compassionate and generous heart. While our Lord was at supper, on a certain occasion, with his friends at Bethany, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, whom he had just raised from the dead, probably in token of her gratitude, came and poured upon him a box of very precious ointment, and wiped his feet with the hair of her head. No sooner was this act of respect and affection towards Jesus performed, than there starts up an advocate for the poor; and in the guise of all that was fair, and kind, and honorable, reproaches this good woman with the charge of wasting the bounties of providence: and there was so much in the remark that looked like being frugal for the sake of being charitable; like mingling benevolence and economy together, that the other disciples seem to have fallen in with

it, and to have lamented that the ointment had not been applied to some better purpose.

But who is this preacher of charity, whose sympathies are so suddenly awakened for the children of want; who feels their necessities so deeply that even an act of affection towards his master gives him pain, because it might have been directed for their relief? It was a thief: it was a traitor: it was a devil. It was not his regard for the poor that made him appear to be their advocate, for he would at that moment have ground the face of the poor for a penny; but it was his insufferable love of money. His heart ached with avarice; and he was probably then devising a plot, by which he should gratify his ruling passion, at the expense of his master's blood. Yes, there was murder in his heart, at the very moment when this pretended plea of charity was upon his tongue.

It had been well for the cause of Christianity, if Judas had been the last to raise objections against a spirit of active benevolence; but unhappily, he stands at the head of a long list of objectors, many of whom have drank so deeply of his spirit, that we should almost think they had sat at his feet, and listened to his instructions. You can hardly lift a hand in the cause of religious charity, but avarice, with a withering blow, stands ready to paralyze it. It does not, indeed, usually, stand forth in its own hideous garb, for then it would be recognised, and driven back in disgrace; but in a multitude of instances, beside that of Judas, it puts on the cloak of economy, and assumes the lying look of charity. When, for instance, any plan is set on foot for evangelizing the heathen, or extending the circulation of the bible, a thousand hearts are throbbing, all on a sudden, for the temporal

miseries of the poor; and a thousand tongues are busy in proclaiming the paramount importance of administering to their necessities. If the invention of Judas himself had been laid under requisition, I can hardly imagine that he could have found out more ingenious reasons for opposing the great cause of religious charity, than are often heard from the lips of our modern objectors.

You perceive, brethren, that the text which I have chosen, though I trust it will not carry me away from the object of this meeting, will lead me into a far less pleasant train of thought than might naturally have arisen from some other passage. It is never a grateful office to discuss objections to a good cause; because it seems to place us within the atmosphere of controversy, in which charity, in all her forms, is least at home; and because too, when our hearts are full, and our hands are busy, we love to forget that our hearts are not beating, and our hands laboring in unison with all around us. But still, it is well known, that in a world like ours, every good work must expect to encounter objections; and so uniformly do we find this to be the case, that if any enterprise, professedly of a religious nature, and of sufficient importance to attract the notice of the world, were to meet no opposition, it would, at least, lead us to inquire whether we were not mistaken in regard to its beneficial tendency. I have already anticipated the remark, that the great cause of propagating Christianity, has had to sustain its full share of opposition; and that, not merely in circles of vulgar ignorance, but from the great and the powerful, from the honorable man and the counsellor. With some, I doubt not that this is chiefly a sin of ignorance; and such need to be enlightened: with others, I fear, it originates

in a disease of the heart, for which the grace of God is the only effectual remedy. But whether the objections to which I allude, are the offspring of ignorance, or depravity, or both, they surely need to be exposed; and I know not whether any occasion would warrant such an attempt better than the present. With respect to you, therefore, my brethren, who are already engaged in this benevolent cause, I shall have gained my purpose in this discourse, if I should stir you up to more active exertion by shewing you how little, after all, can be said against the object to which you are devoted; and as for those who regard the object with distrust or aversion, if there be any such present, I have only to request that they will listen with attention and candor.

Let me just remark, before entering on the discussion, that the objections which I shall bring to your view, I shall consider as made, not so much against any particular department of charitable exertion as against the general cause; or if any limitation be admitted, it will be that which is suggested by the particular objects of this meeting. It will not come at all within my design to discuss the question, what object of charity has the highest claim; though I am willing to remark, in passing, that if we have heathen at home, and heathen abroad, who are equally needy, those who are on our borders, or in the midst of us, have the first claim to our compassion; on the same general principle that it is the duty of every man to provide for his own family rather than those with whom he is not connected. But the truth is, that there is no interference between the different objects of public charity; and though we may regard some with more interest than others, yet, perhaps, there is scarcely any from which we would withhold

the aid of our prayers. Let it be distinctly understood, then, that I have no controversy, in this discourse, with any whose partiality may happen to favor a different object of charity from those for which this occasion bids me especially to plead: it is only with such as oppose the general cause of evangelizing and sanctifying the world.

I. The first objection which I shall notice, as being often made against all attempts to extend the gospel over the world, is that *the time has not yet come; that all these exertions are premature.* The persons who offer this objection, it will be remembered, admit that the world is to be evangelized, at some future period, and that this is to be brought about by human instrumentality.

Now if this objection is valid, it must be supported on one of two grounds; either, that the word of God has explicitly decided that this is a work for future generations, and therefore is not to be attempted by *us;* or else, that providence has intimated the same thing, by opposing obstacles to our success, which are absolutely insurmountable.

In regard to the first of these: where in the bible shall we look for evidence that this great work of sending the gospel over the world does not belong to *us;* that the labor, and the happiness, and the glory of being actively benevolent Christians, are the exclusive privilege of future ages. I venture to say that the volume of inspiration does not contain a single passage that can even be tortured to such a meaning: on the contrary, there is not only a warrant, but an absolute *command* from the Saviour, binding all his followers of whatever age or nation, to engage in this work. "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,*" was the com-

mission which he gave to his disciples before his ascension, and through them, to all succeeding ministers; and all other Christians have as much to do with the spirit of this commission as ministers; for, as the apostle asks, "*how can they preach, except they be sent.*" Unless then you can shew that this commission of our Saviour, has, at some period, been revoked, we say, and we say fearlessly, that it is still in full force; nay, that notwithstanding all the indifference of the church on this subject for so many ages, *it has always been* in full force; and there never has been a time, since our Lord ascended to heaven, when any Christian could take the bible in his hand, and excuse himself from exertion on the ground that the time had not yet come. So far as the authority of God's word is concerned then, the objection which I am considering, falls to the ground.

Nor is it any better supported, on the ground that providence has opposed insurmountable obstacles to the work. What, let me ask, are these obstacles? Is it, that the persons to whom the gospel is to be sent, are, at present, inaccessible; that there are mountians between us and them, which the human foot dare not attempt to traverse; or oceans, which the enterprise of man has never yet ventured to navigate? No; there are no obstacles of this kind, which the merchant in pursuit of wealth, or even the traveller in pursuit of pleasure, does not surmount every year that passes. Is it, that the internal state of those nations, renders it perilous in the extreme to go among them? No; for they have already, in very many instances, received our missionaries with kindness; and there are not wanting men in the community, who are willing to take up their residence among them, provided

only they can be furnished with a subsistence. Is it, that they have hitherto stedfastly resisted every effort to enlighten and sanctify them, and that by living in heathenish darkness a few centuries more, we may hope they will become tired of their miserable degradation, and rise up more readily from the bed of spiritual death, at the call of the gospel? By no means; for the success which has already attended these exertions, proves that the bosom of the savage, or the pagan, is *now* capable of becoming the dwelling place of God's spirit; and all experience testifies, that there is no redeeming power in reason darkened and perverted by sin, which will make him the more ready to sacrifice his lusts and cruelties, when they have become more firmly rivetted by indulgence. Or is it, finally, that the present generation have not the means of engaging in this work; that those who have the gospel, find it difficult, on account of their extreme poverty, to maintain it among themselves? Let the refinement, and luxury, and extravagance of the present age, bear witness that this is not true: for if the Christian nations would all feel the weight of their obligation on this subject, and every man would do according to his several ability, the world would soon be evangelized, and not an individual should know that he was the poorer for it. And I will add, there are circumstances in the present state of the world, which prove beyond all reasonable doubt, not only that there is no impracticability in this object, but that the providence of God, at this moment, most clearly and strongly favors it. I will only ask you to look over the world, and see what has been done already; how the people of God in every country and clime, have felt a heavenly impulse, directing their energies towards the same glorious ob-

ject; how commerce and the arts have been pressed into the service of Jesus Christ; how the spirit of Christian benevolence has been nourished amidst the conflicts and convulsions of nations, so that the laurels of the cross have been gathered even from the field of blood:—Observe all these mighty movements in the church and the world, and then tell me whether God has permitted all this zeal, and energy, and enterprise, and prayer for nothing; whether this is only an evil genius, which has been let loose from the abodes of darkness, to insult our faith and mock the most sacred of our hopes; whether, in a word, there is not a voice in the present arrangements of providence, proclaiming the approach of a more glorious day, and bidding "the sacramental host of God's elect" go forward, as distinctly as that which was heard from the forerunner of our Lord—"*Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.*"

II. Another objection to sending the gospel among the destitute is, *that God will accomplish his own work in his own time*, and therefore, we need give ourselves no concern about it.

This, at first view, may seem to indicate some sense of dependence on the providence of God; but a moment's reflection will discover to you, that it is the very spirit which, of all others, conceals the elements of indifference or opposition to the gospel. Brethren, be not deceived. God is not honored by any acknowledgment of his agency, which is intended as a mere cloak to indolence. He does not require you to feel that sense of dependance, which shall bind your hands with an iron chain, and leave you to be operated upon as though you were a stock. But in order to try this principle, just for

a moment, bring it to bear upon subjects in which you do feel an interest. If you are a farmer, why did you not, at the opening of the season, instead of casting your seed into the earth, and watching its progress with the care and attention of a good husbandman ;—why did you not say to yourself, "I will trust to the providence of God to do all this labor ; and when the season of harvest comes, I will go into my fields, and reap the product of the divine bounty." Or if you are a merchant, why did you not say, at the usual time of purchasing your supplies, "I will cast all this care upon God, and trust to his providence to replenish my shelves, and thus I will grow rich without submitting to the usual drudgery of a mercantile life." You would be offended with me, and justly, if I were to suppose you capable of such intolerable folly. But who does not see that it is precisely the same principle which you admit, when you urge the objection which I am considering. In both cases, it has all the absurdity of barefaced fatalism. It is true, indeed, that this is the work of God, and He will accomplish it in his own best time ; but it will be, not by miracle, but by ordinary means ; the very same means which we now see in such successful operation. The energy of Omnipotence is never wasted, if I may use the expression, in working miracles for the accomplishment of any thing, to which ordinary means are adequate : there is not an instance of it in the whole record of God's dispensations. Yes, I repeat it, the promise of God is pledged that He will accomplish his own work, and by the instrumentality of his servants ; and if *you* choose to decline the honor of bearing a part in it, He will enlist *others* into his service. But, as for arresting the progress of this work, you cannot. You may do all that you can to oppose,

and discourage, and terrify those who are engaged in it; you may concentrate the energies of genius, and industry, and wit, and ridicule, and let them all do their utmost—And what then? *He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh;* and you will, ere long, know that it would not have been a more mad, or a more hopeless project, to have set out to travel through immensity, extinguishing every sun, and blotting out every world, till you had converted the universe into a blank field of desolation.

III. Another objection not unfrequently made to sending the gospel among savages and heathen, is, that *they can do well enough without it;* and that, as they will be judged only according to the light which they have, they will not be required to answer for the rejection of it.

But could you, my friend, do well enough without the gospel? Are all these temporal comforts, which it secures to you, so unimportant, that you could consent cheerfully to resign them up, and sink down to the miserable degradation of heathen or savage life? Is the happiness of civilized society, and social life, and domestic relations of so little value, that you could relinquish it without a sigh, and go, and make your home, and find your grave among the inhabitants of the wilderness? Above all, is the certainty of an immmortal existence not to be preferred to the dark and trembling apprehensions of unenlightened reason;—the certainty that God will forgive sin, to the gloomy forebodings of mere natural conscience; and is there nothing in a pagan dying bed which you would not as soon welcome as the peaceful or triumphant departure of the Christian? If you value the blessings of the gospel yourself, remember that they would be *as* valuable to

savages and heathen as they are to you. They have the same capacity for improvement, and are, originally, as capable of the most refined enjoyment as yourself; and before you decide that *they* can do well enough without the gospel, sit down, and make a sober estimate of all its blessings, and say, at what price, *you* would consent to part with them: say, for how much, you would be induced to live the life of a savage, to grope through the valley of death by the dim twilight of nature, and to take your chance with savages and heathen in the eternal world.

But you say, perhaps, that these people will be judged only according to their means; and if they do not enjoy the gospel, they will not have to answer for the rejection of it. This is an undoubted truth. God is not a hard master. He will require none of his stewards to account for more talents than he has entrusted to them; those who *have sinned in the law, will be judged by the law.* But what then? Because the heathen will not have to answer for the rejection of the gospel, is it a light thing for them to perish? Is there nothing to be deprecated in the doom of an impenitent pagan, whose reason has been perverted, and whose conscience deadned by long continued indulgence in sin? But you say, perhaps, that God is merciful, and that it is impossible that He should suffer whole nations to perish. Why did not his mercy avert the tremendous doom of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain? Why did it suffer the dungeons of despair ever to be built; and why does it permit, at this moment, the weeping, and wailing, and untold agonies of the lost? God is indeed merciful; but there is nothing in his mercy to nullify that declaration of his word, that "*without holiness no man*

shall see the Lord." Now, it is well known that the great mass of these people are unholy;—deeply polluted with sin;—to every good work reprobate; and we have no occasion to pry into the secret counsels of God, to decide that *such* cannot be saved; for we know that it is a law of his kingdom, that nothing which defileth can enter therein. But, if you only mean that individuals among the heathen may receive the grace of God, in some way with which we are unacquainted, I have nothing to oppose to this; though even this supposition is altogether independant of scripture testimony, except that *God's tender mercies are over all his works.* I do indeed indulge the hope that there are some in the very bosom of paganism, whose hearts are right with God; that some souls take an upward flight, when they are dismissed from the body, that have been familiar with heathen abominations, and nursed at the breast of idolatry: But what will you say of the great multitude, who are sunk down in all the depths of moral pollution? If the bible has told us that men are sanctified by the truth;—that it is the power of God unto salvation, is it not presumption to indulge the hope that the heathen will *generally* be saved without it;—that some other medicine has been provided for the disease of their souls, only because we, to whom the gospel is entrusted, are unwilling to send it to them.

But, if the poor heathen to whom the gospel is not sent, do not have to answer for the rejection of it, as it is certain they will not, yet, rely on it, we shall have to account for not sending it to them. Many of them are upon our borders; and the cry, "*Come over and help us,*" is echoed from every cabin and log-house in the wilder-

ness. If we turn a deaf ear, will not the record of this negligence be brought to testify against us in the judgment?

IV. But another objection is, that *you have nothing to spare for such purposes.* Pray, my friend, is it because you are so poor that you cannot afford to offer a mite in charity; or is it because you consider the object unworthy of being promoted? If it is the latter, then let me tell you that, whether you think it deserving your attention or not, it is the cause which has occupied the Infinite mind from eternity; in which all the agonies of Calvary were endured; in which the blood of martyrs has been poured out like water; and which is destined to be the theatre of the most magnificent exhibition of the Divine perfections. Or, do you make this plea on the ground of your poverty? But, in order that it may be sustained, what amount of poverty do you suppose that you must be able to plead? If all your earnings are needed for the support of your own family, then I admit that you are justly absolved from this obligation; because providence has constituted you their supporter and guardian. But, perhaps, while you are pleading poverty as an excuse for not assisting to send the gospel to the destitute, you would be offended, if you supposed the world actually regarded you as a poor man: perhaps, too, you are not so poor, but that you can afford something to gratify the pride of dress or equipage; something, it may be, for luxury and extravagance; something even for amusement and dissipation. The amount of this plea of poverty, then, as it respects many people, is this;—that when the claims of appetite, of pride, of self indulgence, are presented, they are both rich and bountiful: but when

their suffering Saviour speaks to them from the agonies of his cross, and tenderly urges them to feed his sheep and his lambs, their hands are clenched in an iron grasp, and their hearts are harder than the nether mill-stone.

V. Another objection is drawn from *the alledged want of success by which these charitable exertions have hitherto been attended:* it is confidently said that after a fair experiment, it is found that nothing can be done in the way of evangelizing the heathen; and that it is high time that such waste of money, and labor, and life, should be discontinued.

In reply to this, I would ask, in the first place, for I take it for granted that the objector is not an infidel—whether any thing can set aside our obligation to obey a plain command of God;—whether, for instance, Abraham would have been justified in refusing to yield his beloved Isaac at the Divine command, only because it was a dispensation which he could not comprehend. Nay, I will ask, whether it is not one of the great practical results of Christian faith, that it inspires a readiness to obey every part of the will of God, so far as it is made known; and that too, without any anxious regard to consequences. Suppose, then, that the fact urged in the objection were proved—that all these benevolent exertions have hitherto been to little or no purpose, how much ought that to weigh in the view of a person, who acknowledges that the command of God to evangelize the heathen, is, at this moment, resting with all its mighty authority, upon the Christian world? What if the labors of the missionaries in heathen lands, *have*, hitherto, been unsuccessful;—is that to be our signal for disobeying the plainest of all divine precepts? What is the language of this conduct, save that we will not trust

God farther than we can understand the reasons of his dispensations?

I am ready to admit, indeed, that there may have been errors in regard to some parts of the great system of benevolent effort: but who has not lived long enough to know that there are errors in every thing human; and, especially, in a work of such magnitude as this, in which so many parts are to be fitly joined together, how unreasonable would it be to expect that the whole should go into magnificent operation, without any delay or embarrassment. Perhaps you do not learn to make a plough or a shoe, till you have spoiled more than one in the attempt: why then will you decide that nothing can be done for evangelizing the heathen, because you have only seen the infancy of the plan by which it is to be accomplished, and because you have seen it struggling with a common degree of human imperfection?

But I have another answer in reserve to this objection; and it is an absolute denial of the fact on which the objection is built. I charge no man with intentional misrepresentation; but I must be allowed to say that I blush for the ignorance of those, who, with all the means of information within their reach, can coolly assert that all the charitable efforts of the present day are lost labor; that our missionaries in the east, and the west, and the south, are wearing out their lives, and living on public charity, without witnessing any beneficial result from their labors. The time, of course, does not admit of an induction of particulars; but I venture to say that any man, who will bestow proper attention on this subject, in examining the authentic missionary documents, and will rise up with the

conviction to which I have just referred, must have a hardihood of incredulity, or a talent at misunderstanding plain facts, which may justly entitle him to be regarded an anomaly in the species. Viewing all the exertions which have been made in different parts of the world, as belonging to the same extended system, we maintain fearlessly, that Christians have every reason to be encouraged in view of their success. The wilderness has not assumed the aspect of Eden in a moment, and we did not expect it; but one green spot after another has appeared, and every thing indicates that it will ere long open upon the eye in all the richness and beauty of a bright and vernal landscape.

VI. It is moreover objected that *these benevolent operations are under the direction of different religious denominations;* that each will take good care to give all due prominence to its own peculiarities; and hence, those among whom the missionaries are sent will either be liable to embrace some spurious system of Christianity, or to be disturbed by the mischiefs of sectarism, or else to be bewildered in a maze of contradictory opinions.

With respect to the first part of this objection, that there is danger, from the diversity of sects which engage in this work, that some will propagate false views of Christianity; I answer that that system must be corrupt indeed, which might not be safely substituted either for the abominations of paganism, or for absolute ignorance of *all* religion. But, if there *be* corrupt and distorted systems, bearing the name of Christianity, while they have nothing of its beauty, or its power, which are industriously propagated, is that a reason why the genuine gospel should not be suffered to go forth, and exert

its quickening and sanctifying energy? Is it not rather an argument why those who hold the gospel in its purity should be more active, and endeavor, if possible, to neutralize the influence of this false teaching? If you knew that some wretch were busy in poisoning the fountains on which great numbers of your fellow creatures were dependant, would you sit down in silence, and speculate coldly upon their miseries, or would you rise, in all your compassion and energy, and endeavor to counteract the operation of the elements of death? Or, if a band infidels—say, if you please, the apostles of Mohammed, were to land on our shores, with the intention of penetrating into our western wilderness, in the character of missionaries, ought that to be a signal for recalling the heralds of salvation who have gone thither, and of extinguishing the few gleams of light which Christianity has already shed upon the children of the desert? Equally preposterous would it be to object to sending the gospel among the destitute, on the ground that some *calling themselves Christians*, have gone among them, who propagate doctrines with which Christianity can have no communion.

But you say that the tendency of these efforts is to stir up a spirit of controversy, where the people are now quiet. If I did not know that this had actually been said, and by men of high standing too, I could not believe it possible that any man in the community, would put his character for common sense so much at hazard, as to offer such an objection. Yes, they are quiet indeed; and so is *he* quiet too, who has drained a cup of intoxicating poison, and lies senseless and paralyzed, in a lethargy from which no mortal power can waken him. What are all the evils of sectarism, in their most appalling

form, compared with the unbroken stillness of spiritual death, which reigns in those communities where the gospel is not known? Is there a man among us who is so much the slave of party, that he would be indifferent whether the gospel were propagated at all, unless every convert could be baptized into the name of his own sect? I know not and care not to what denomination he belongs;—but if I do not greatly mistake, that man would, if it were in his power, turn the keys of the kingdom upon every one who cannot pronounce his shibboleth;—and though, for ought I know, he may be a good Congregationalist, or a good Presbyterian, or a good Episcopalian, sure I am that he is not a good Christian. But if you think the introduction of the gospel into those destitute regions would be attended with so much danger, on the ground of religious sectarism, let me remind you that you have one means of forming an accurate judgment on the subject, which may not have occurred to you. It is your lot to live in a country where all the evils resulting from the existence of different religious denominations are felt: Say then, *in view of your own experience*, whether you would choose to escape from them at the expense of plunging into all the absurdities and pollutions of a heathen land. If the inconvenience of living among Baptists, and Methodists, aud Episcopalians, and others who differ from you on some unessential points, is more intolerable to *you*, than the preposterous doctrines and stupid rites of paganism, doubtless it would be so to the *heathen:* but before we can believe you honest in making such an assertion, think it not strange if we expect that you will shew your faith by your works, and actually remove from this region of different Christian denominations, to some part

of the world where you can enjoy the dark and awful privilege of living without the gospel.

But do you tell me that the gospel is preached under so many forms, that it is impossible that those to whom it is sent should know what it really is? I answer that the great majority of those who have gone to the heathen are men, in whom every other name is lost in the hallowed name of Christian; who, notwithstanding they belong to different denominations, are yet far enough from being the slaves of any; who can meet together, and strengthen each other's hands, and rejoice in each other's success as truly as if they had been nursed in the bosom of the same church. These men have, indeed, their different opinions on some unessential subjects; but in all that relates immediately to the soul's salvation, there is a perfect community of interest, and feeling, and action. It is not true, as this objection assumes, that our missionaries are devoted to the interests of a party: or whatever may be true of individuals, it is certain that the great mass of them are men who care for nothing in comparison with the mighty interests of the soul. Let it be remembered too, that even if the fact assumed in the objection were better supported than it is, there would be a redeeming influence from the circulation of the bible; for when the time has arrived that the heathen are so much enlightened as to receive the peculiarities of *any* sect, it may surely be presumed that they will be able, in some measure, to reflect and examine for themselves.

But this objection has the most ominous bearing on the prospects of the heathen world, inasmuch as the alledged evil on which it is predicated, is not likely soon, if ever, to

be removed: for it admits of question, at least, whether, even in the best days of the church, there may not be shades of difference still existing among those, who are united in all the leading principles of Christianity. If, therefore, all attempts to evangelize the heathen were to be suspended, till this objection should be removed, I see not but that one generation must descend to the tomb after another, amid all the darkness and horrors of paganism, until the succession should finally be stopped, by the arrival of the judgment of the great day.

I cannot pass from this objection, my hearers, without saying that one of the most lovely and glorious aspects in which I can view the benevolent operations of the present day, is, that they are actually uniting the feelings and interests of Christians of different name, who nevertheless agree in all that is essential in the gospel. When, for instance, I see the British and Foreign Bible Socity, or the similar national institution in our own country, disclaiming all communion with the spirit of sectarism, and its treasury, from time to time, replenished with gifts from various Christian denominations, I rejoice that there is already at least one spot on earth, where the voice of controversy is hushed, and the jealousies of party are laid to sleep; one altar on which Christians of every name will consent to inscribe, "CHARITY;" and I cannot but regard it as one of the means, by which providence designs to bring about that universal harmony of feeling among brethren, which is to constitute one of the glories of the millenial day.

Finally: An objection not unfrequently urged against the general object for which I am pleading, is, that *it is by no means certain how these charitable contributions are applied;*

that they may, or may not be appropriated to the objects for which they are solicited.

If it be said that a proportion of those to whom the management of our public charities is confided, are of my own profession; I surely need not hesitate to claim for them the character of honest men;—men too, of ability enough to make a proper application of any donations that may be entrusted to them. Let it be remembered, however, that they are associated with men of the first respectability in civil life; to whom the suffrages of the people have confided the most important political interests, and who have always been ready to every good word and work. If these men are qualified to manage the complicated machine of civil government, perhaps it is not claiming too much for them, to say that they are capable of managing the charitable funds committed to their care: and if they have never yet turned traitors to the state, is it charitable, or even reasonable to suspect that they stand ready to betray the interests of the church? I have already said that imperfection attaches to every thing human; and in a system so complicated as the great system of public charity, there is always a *possibility* that errors may be committed; but you incur no greater hazard in giving your money for this object, than you do for the support of civil government: for both are managed by human hands, and both are subject to human imperfection. But, if you still doubt in regard to the qualifications, or fidelity of those to whom the disposition of these funds is confided, by reading our missionary journals, you may know for yourself that they are not misapplied. Many a destitute congregation, which has already been gladdened by the return of Christian privileges;

many a pious family, whose hearts have throbbed with joy at the arrival of some missionary in the desert; many a little Indian child, who has been snatched from the degradation of savage life, and brought within the regenerating influence of Christianity, could testify that the gifts which are cast into the treasury of Christian benevolence, are sacredly applied to the objects for which they are designed.

But you will say, perhaps, that some of the objects of charity, at the present day, you cannot approve. You are at liberty, then, to take your choice of them all, and to consecrate your influence and exertions to whatever object you think most desirable. There is a society in active operation, designed to meliorate the condition of the Jews; but, perhaps, you think, as some have actually thought, that these exertions are premature. Remember, then, that the world abounds with gentiles; and that your charity is needed to assist in evangelizing *them*. But, perhaps, you have learned to look with some distrust on the cause of *foreign* missions: then let me direct your attention to the poor savages, who occupy the immense regions of desert in our own country. But do you say that even this is a great distance from us; and that there are others who are almost equally needy, still nearer home? For *their* benefit then, let *your* charity be applied; and I doubt not that there will be a record made of it in heaven. But, perhaps, you have never been satisfied of the utility of *missionary* societies, and would prefer that your charity should go into some other channel. Happily for one part of the object for which I am pleading this afternoon, the treasury of the Bible Society is now open; and you will, in a few

moments, be solicited to cast in your gifts. But do you tell me that you have scruples about contributing to the funds of *any* charitable association? Then go and search out objects of charity for yourself: go to the individuals who have not even the bible in their houses, and present it with an humble prayer that it may be blessed to their salvation. Go around to the cottages of the poor, and carry along with you to distribute, a bundle of tracts—those little winged messengers of salvation: or, if you are yourself poor, and have nothing else to give, let your example, your influence, your prayers be cheerfully given. The field of Christian benevolence is wide, and you are at liberty to occupy what part of it you please: but surely the fact that you do not approve one particular object, makes nothing against the rest. Help forward the cause of the Redeemer in whatever way you will, and your pious offerings will be acceptable, both on earth and in heaven. But, if you excuse yourself from exertion in favor of one object, on the ground of your zeal for another, and, finally, do nothing for any, forgive me, if I say that you remind me of the man, who was seized with a fit of compassion for the poor, just as the box of ointment was broken over his master's head. Nay, I will venture to go farther, and say, that if the awful scene were now to be acted over, in which Jesus was betrayed into the hands of his enemies;—if this house of prayer were to be converted into the very garden where he went to pray; and if I were to see the murderous band, at this moment, rushing in to accomplish their hellish purpose; I should expect to see among them the man, whom I had followed round the whole circle of Christian charity in answering objections; and that is the man whom, of all others,

I should be prepared to find carrying the bag, and saluting his master with a kiss.

And now, brethren, what remains, but that we gather from our subject fresh resolution to be actively devoted to the object, for which we are assembled. You have seen that the cause in which you are engaged, after being tried in the very crucible of objections, comes out brighter than ever; so that you have gained no mean triumph, while you have been lingering on the enemies ground. Let the result be, that this occasion shall inspire you with new zeal, and lead you to act with redoubled energy. Every thing in the aspect of providence—every thing in the promises of God—every thing in the necessities of the destitute, bids you go forward. What though opposition may frown upon you, and sometimes chill the ardor of your hopes? It is the opposition of an enemy, who feels the arm of his power to be withering. Though it is a giant that you have to encounter, you meet him in his dying struggle. In a little while too, the period of your activity will be over. You will yield this great work into other hands, and descend to the tomb. Let your example be such that it shall be a safe guide to those who come after you. Let your works of charity, and fervent prayers, and faith unfeigned, mingle in one bright and beautiful offering, and you shall leave a grateful memorial on earth, and meet a glorious reward in heaven.

One word, and I have done.—My hearers, I come before you this afternoon to solicit your charity; and yet it is not I, but the wretched and perishing, who make an appeal to your hearts; or rather, it is that compassionate Redeemer, who has pronounced their cause to be his own. I hear the sigh of

death floating on every breeze that sweeps over the empire of paganism, mingled with an importunate cry for your charitable aid. I hear another voice that comes from the cottage of the poor, and in a tone of earnest supplication begs of you a bible. And now I turn to you, my friends, and ask whether this appeal to your compassion shall be in vain. If you hesitate, look around you and see where you are; in a place which tells you most distinctly of the love of God, and the compassion of Jesus; and which reminds you, by the most hallowed associations, of your own highly favored condition. If you hesitate still, recollect that this is only the threshold of another temple not made with hands; that the mild glory which reigns here, is but a beam from that sun of righteousness which will pour into the upper sanctuary its condensed and everlasting effulgence. Say then, ye rich men and merchants, while you are sitting here at the foot of the cross, and in the gate of heaven, how much you will give out of your abundance, to carry the gospel to those who are sitting in the shadow of death. Say, ye lawyers, who are accustomed to plead the cause of temporal wretchedness, how large a part of your fee shall be subtracted for the spiritual relief of those, who cannot approach you with the story of their miseries. Say, ye mechanics and farmers, whose industrious enterprize gives you so honorable a place in the community, how much of your earnings shall be consecrated to save immortal souls from the agonies of the second death. Say too, ye mothers, who bring your children to this holy altar, and give them up to God in baptism, what are you prepared to give, to carry the same privilege, and the same joy to other mothers, who now give their children up in bloody baptism at the altars

of idolatry. Before another anniversary of these societies, some whom I now address, will, not improbably, be slumbering beneath the clods. Let each one, then, bring such an offering, as he would be willing to have recorded in the book of God's remembrance as the last of his charitable deeds: and when that book shall be opened, may the record of our charities shew that a spirit of compassion was poured out upon us; and may some among the saved have occasion to hail this hour with everlasting gratulations.